

Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills among Practicing Leaders: Reality or Myth?

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For decades, leaders and managers in many organizations have been advised to leave their emotions at the door when they entered their offices. However, in recent years empirical research has shown that such advice was inaccurate and impractical; there is no way to avoid the influence of emotions on the behaviors and actions of employees in the workplace (Druskat, Sala, & Mount, 2006). According to neurological research discoveries, emotions are an integral component of cognitive reasoning without which the brain cannot establish priorities and make decisions (Damasio, 1994). Thus, the ability to understand and express oneself, to understand others and relate to them, to manage one's own emotions and those of others, and to use emotions as a source of information is what generally is referred to as emotional intelligence (EI) (Bar-On, 2006; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

A review of empirical literature suggests that EI is a required set of skills for effective leadership (Antonakis, 2003; Emmerling & Goleman, 2003; Johnson, Aiken, & Steggerda, 2005). George (2000) argued that emotionally intelligent leaders are better at creating and communicating a compelling vision across the organization and providing inspiration and motivation for collective performance (Melita-Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). These leaders are also competent in decision making and creating alternative options "to settle disagreements, arriving at win-win solutions to problems, and ensuring cooperation and trust throughout an organization" (George, 2000, p. 1042). Influential leaders manage their own and others' emotions better (Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996) and gain the emotional support of their followers to achieve organizational goals (Goleman, 1998). As Roy (2015) noted, it is because leadership involves

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a leadership training program on participants' emotional intelligence scores. The target population for the study consisted of participants in leadership positions. Seventy-one participants from over 30 countries took the pre-test, and 45 subjects of the sample participated in the second training and took the post-test. The findings of the study show that there was growth in mean scores a year after training and coaching had occurred.

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constructive and creative influence, relationships, and emotions, all of which are reciprocal between leaders and their followers, that trait EI becomes so crucial to effective leadership.

Based on the significant role of EI in leadership development, organizations are increasingly investing in EI training interventions to educate their employees about the importance of emotional intelligence and help them increase their EI skills (Muyia & Kacirek, 2009). As a result, emotional intelligence has grown to be a multimillion-dollar training industry (Kunnanatt, 2004; Weinberger, 2002). However, despite the popularity that surrounds EI training interventions, the empirical studies on EI development are limited in number and represent contradictory evidence. Moreover, leaders as participants of EI training interventions are underrepresented

in the literature, given that the sample in most of the previous studies on EI development is composed of college students and employees who are barely engaged in leadership responsibilities (Farnia, 2015). Therefore, there is a legitimate need to further investigate to what extent EI could be developed through training interventions among practicing leaders.

The Study's Purpose and Hypotheses

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the impact of an emotional intelligence training program on a group of international non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders. Specifically, the study sought to determine whether the training intervention resulted in a significant change in the EI mean scores of the participants. To this end, the following hypotheses were postulated:

Hypothesis 1: Participants' overall EI mean scores would increase after completing the EI training intervention.

Hypothesis 2: Participants' scores on the five EI dimensions of intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood skills would increase after they completed the EI training intervention.

Emotional Intelligence: Origin, Definitions, and Theories

The theory of EI dates back to 1920 with the work of Thorndike, who hypothesized that intelligence had academic as well as emotional and

social components (Thorndike, 1920). This idea was further supported by Wechsler, a leading scholar who played a key role in the development of IQ tests commonly used today who noted, “in addition to intellective there are also non-intellective factors that determine intelligent behavior” (Wechsler, 1940, pp. 444–445). Albert Einstein (1879–1955), a legendary physicist, cautioned those in leadership to take care not to make the intellect their *god* and noted that while intellect had powerful muscles, it lacked personality and could not lead, but only serve. In 1983, Gardner proposed the theory of multiple intelligences. Thus, Gardner (1983) identified eight types of intelligences—namely, visual/spatial, verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences. Gardner noted that there was an overemphasis on the role of academic intelligence in predicting life success given that there were multiple intelligences in action. This theory was later expounded upon by Salovey and Mayer’s (1990) in their seminal works on EI.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) conceptualized EI as “the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (p. 5). Taking a broader perspective, Bar-On (1997) defined EI as “a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands” (p. 14). Finally, Goleman (1995) described EI as the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions effectively in others and ourselves.

Apparently, as a new construct, emotional intelligence does not enjoy a unanimously agreed-on definition and theory. Berrocal and Pacheco (2006) identified three major theoretical models of EI that have guided the lines of research in the field. These models include the EI ability model by Mayer and Salovey (1997), Bar-On’s emotional–social intelligence model (1997), and Goleman’s emotional competencies model (1998). These models are broadly categorized into “ability” and “mixed” models. An ability model looks at EI through the traditional or cognitive intelligence lens and “assumes that EI develops over time, can be correlated with measures of IQ, and can be measured using a test based on performance” (Muyia, 2009, p. 691). The mixed model of EI focuses on the non-cognitive intelligence and subjects “have some degree of skill in the affective domain, along with skill in whatever cognitive elements that are at play in each ability” (Muyia, 2009, p. 691). Despite the discrepancies between mixed and ability EI models, Petrides and Furnham (2001) emphasized their commonalities and perceived them as being complementary rather than mutually exclusive. A review of literature on the existing measures of both types of measuring EI revealed that most EI models included awareness, recognition, and regulation of emotions for inter- and intra personal purposes (Petrides & Furnham, 2001).

From the preceding discussion, it is a truism that scholars disagree regarding the definitions of EI and how it should be measured. Like any

other new construct, such controversies should be welcome and should lead to additional research on this new construct of EI. Nafukho (2009) recognized EI as a significant construct for the field of human resource development and emphasized the critical need for rigorous empirical research to further determine the applications of EI in organizational settings. Regarding the definition controversies, Berrocal and Pacheco (2006) observed “the co-existence of multiple ways to study emotional competencies and abilities demonstrate a new and incipient field, searching for a satisfactory scientific explanation to the processes of interrelationships between cognition and emotion from different points of view” (p. 10).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Bar-On's (1997) theory of social-emotional intelligence, and the emotional quotient inventory (EQ-i) was used to assess the components of emotional intelligence. Bar-On's model emerged as a result of an extensive review of literature focused on the personality characteristics that determine life success beyond cognitive intelligence. It consists of five domains:

1. Intrapersonal (including self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization)
2. Interpersonal (including empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships)
3. Adaptability (including flexibility, reality testing, and problem solving)
4. Stress management (including stress tolerance, impulse control, and empathy)
5. General mood (including optimism and happiness) (Bar-On, 2006)

The main advantage of Bar-On's (1997) model of EI measurement is that the model goes beyond the emotion-related mental abilities as conceptualized by Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model and encompasses social skills and personality traits that are not necessarily in the realm of intelligence. Table 1 set forth the details of Bar-On's model of emotional and social intelligence. Bar-On's model is associated with the EQ-i test to measure the domains and sub-domains. Similar to IQ tests, EQ-i has the mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15. According to Bar-On (2006), average and above-average scores suggest that the “respondent is effective in social and emotional functioning” (p. 15). The validity and robustness of the model have been established through numerous researches conducted around the world with thousands of participants (Bar-On, 2006). According to the previous studies, EI as measured by EQ-i develops with age, and people of various ethnicities perform the same on it. In addition, there are no differences between men's and women's performance on the test in terms of EQ total, although women are

TABLE 1 BAR-ON'S MODEL OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

EQ SUBSCALES	DEFINITION	DIMENSIONS
Self-Regard	The ability to respect and accept oneself as basically good	Intrapersonal Skills
Emotional Self-Awareness	The ability to recognize one's feelings	
Assertiveness	The ability to express feelings, beliefs, and thoughts and to defend one's rights in a nondestructive manner	
Independence	The ability to be self-directed and self-controlled in one's thinking and actions and to be free of emotional dependency	
Self-Actualization	The ability to realize one's potential capacities	
Empathy	The ability to be aware of, to understand, and to appreciate the feelings of others	Interpersonal Skills
Social Responsibility	The ability to demonstrate oneself as a cooperative, contributing, and constructive member of one's social group	
Interpersonal Relationship	The ability to establish and maintain mutually satisfying relationships that are characterized by intimacy and by giving and receiving affection	
Reality Testing	The ability to assess the correspondence between what is experienced and what objectively exists	Adaptability
Flexibility	The ability to adjust one's emotions, thoughts, and behavior to changing situations and conditions	
Problem Solving	The ability to identify and define problems, as well as to generate and implement potentially effective solutions	
Stress Tolerance	The ability to withstand adverse events and stressful situations without "falling apart" by actively and positively coping with stress	Stress Management
Impulse Control	The ability to resist or delay an impulse, drive, or temptation to act	
Optimism	The ability to look at the brighter side of life and to maintain a positive attitude, even in the face of adversity	General Mood
Happiness	The ability to feel satisfied with one's life, to enjoy oneself and others, and to have fun	

Source: Bar-On, R. (1997). *Bar-On emotional quotient inventory: Technical manual*. Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems (pp. 15–21).

better at emotional awareness, and men are more competent in emotion-management domains (Bar-On, 2006).

Bar-On (2006) argued that the construct validity of the EQ-i confirms that the model describes emotional and social intelligence. A small portion of the variance in EQ-i is ascribed to cognitive intelligence (4%) and personality traits (15%). This small overlap indicates that the EQ-i is measuring something other than personality traits and cognitive intelligence. Bar-On's model predicts various aspects of human performance. According to the previous studies, it is correlated with physical and psychological health, social interaction, self-actualization, subjective well-being, and performance at school and workplace (Bar-On, 2006). EQ has a tremendously more significant role in predicting performance than IQ. As Bar-On (2006) noted:

30% of the variance of occupational performance is based on ESI (emotional—social intelligence) as described by the Bar-On model. When compared with Wagner's extensive meta-analysis that revealed that cognitive intelligence accounts for approximately 6% of occupational performance (1997), the findings presented here suggest that EQ accounts for about five times more variance than IQ when explaining this type of performance. (p. 20)

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Development: The Empirical Evidence

There is a controversy in the literature regarding the possibility of developing EI through training. While some scholars of EI strongly argue that EI can be increased as a result of training (e.g., Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Nafukho, 2009), there are others who doubt such a possibility exists (e.g., Dulewicz & Higgs, 1999). Based on these controversies and a call for scientific research to determine “if emotional intelligence training has a desirable effect on behavioral outcomes and might change Emotional Intelligence itself” (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004, p. 211), several scholars conducted quasi-experimental studies and evaluated the change in EI pre- and post-training interventions.

Using Goleman's (1998) emotional competencies model, Boyatzis (2001) evaluated the impact of a course entitled “Leadership Assessment and Development” on MBA students at Case Western Reserve University and found significant improvements in the EI scores of the participants after the training. However, Beigi and Shirmohammadi (2010) who conducted an EI training based on the same model for employees of a financial institution, observed little change in the EI mean scores of the participants after the training.

Groves, McEnrue, and Shen (2008) recruited a sample of business students in an experiment–control research design, conducted an intensive 11-week EI training based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model, and measured the change in EI scores. Their results indicated that EI was developed as the experimental group demonstrated statistically significant gains in EI mean scores while the control group did not show any significant pre- or post-test differences using the same model. Pool and Qualter (2012) conducted a training program for undergraduate university students and found that it was possible to improve the emotional self-efficacy and some aspects of emotional intelligence as significant changes appeared in the EI mean scores of the experimental group. Nelis, Quoidbach, Mikolajczak, & Hansenne (2009) investigated the possibility of increasing EI through four training sessions based on Petrides and Furnham's (2001) trait EI model with two groups (control vs. experimental) of participants. Results of the study revealed a significant increase in emotion-identification and emotion-management abilities in the training group only. A follow-up study after six months showed that these changes were persistent.

Using Bar-On's (1997) model, Muiya and Kacirek (2009) examined the effects of a leadership and emotional intelligence training program on a group of employees in leadership positions and found no significant differences in their EI mean scores following the course of EI training. However, Bar-On (2006) described the results of several studies conducted in Sweden, the United Kingdom, and South Africa (mostly unpublished) that reported significant changes in the EQ scores of the participants after EI training interventions. Based on these studies, Bar-On (2006), noted, "factors described by the Bar-On model are both teachable and learnable" (p. 22).

Methods

Study Participants

The target population for this study consisted of NGO leaders. Seventy-one leaders who came from over 30 countries agreed to take part in the study, but participant attrition resulted in only 38 complete data sets at the end of data collection. The attrition occurred due to retirement, promotion, moving to a different workstation or country, and voluntary or involuntary employee turnover. Thus, 79% ($n = 30$) of the participants were female and 21% ($n = 8$) were male. The age of the participants ranged from 29 to 57 with the mean of 45.

Instrument for Data Collection

The EQ-i instrument was used to measure the EI of the participants before and after the training. EQ-i is a self-report test containing 133 items and takes about 40 minutes to complete. Participants are required to judge the level to which each of the 133 statements of the test describes them, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very seldom true of me*) to 5 (*very often true of me*). EQ-i is a valid test in terms of content, construct, and convergent and divergent validity indexes; its reliability has been investigated by several researchers around the world over 20 years (Bar-On, 2006). Bar-On (2006) reported the internal consistency of 0.97 and test-retest reliabilities of 0.72 (for males) and 0.80 (for females) at six months, which were consistent with the findings of other researchers. In this study a Cronbach alpha of 0.88 for internal consistency was obtained, indicating a strong reliability of the instrument.

The Emotional Intelligence Training Intervention

The participants attended a 5-day EI training workshop that focused on self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship-management skills. Workshop participants received confidential reports on their performance during the workshop. They were provided with individual coaching sessions to assist them in the interpretation of the results of the EQ-i assessment they took at the beginning of the

training. They also had the opportunity to receive additional professional coaching on the results of the second EQ-i taken after the training. The EI results showed whether the participants were people oriented, process oriented, or task oriented in their leadership approaches. The EI results also showed participant scores as being “enhanced” (EI = 110+), meaning the EI was well developed; “effective” (EI = 100–109), meaning the participant had adequate emotional capacity; “consider developing” (EI = 90–99), meaning adequate emotional capacity with further development in certain areas warranted; and “develop” (EI = under 90), meaning there was underdeveloped emotional capacity, requiring improvement. The EQ-I advanced version provides details on what should be done to maintain the enhanced EI or to develop the underdeveloped EI.

The coaching sessions were confidential and allowed participants to (1) review the results of their EQ-I, (2) discuss the challenges that they faced, (3) receive personal feedback based on the coach’s observations of their behaviors during the workshop, and (4) develop individual strategies to improve their emotional intelligence skills with the assistance of the coach. Participants were encouraged to contact the coaches if they needed additional assistance and advice or information about their EI competencies for a one-year period. Thus, coaching focused on providing the participants with the resources needed to enhance learning, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management in the workplace. When the participants took the EQ-i following the initial training and coaching, there was growth in the EI mean scores (discussed in the “Results” section of this article).

Research Procedures and Data Collection

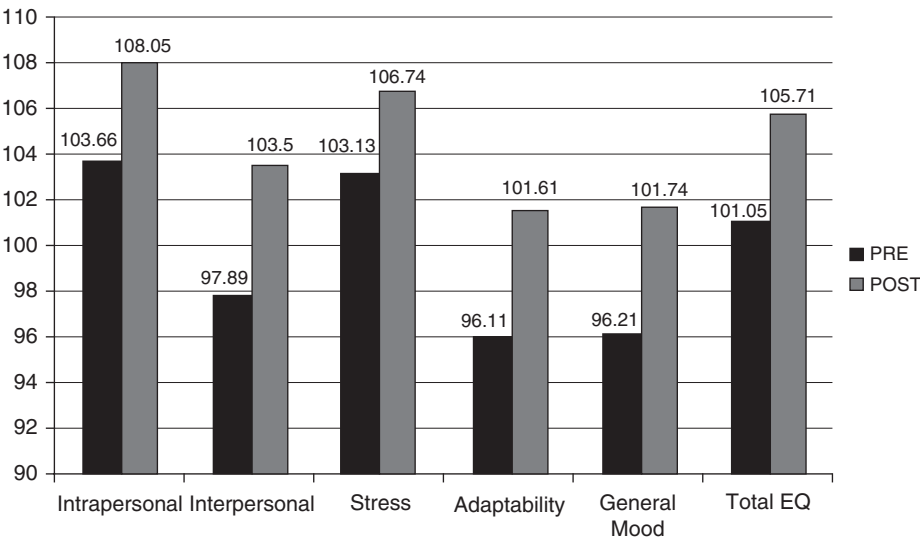
The authors worked collaboratively with the international NGO’s associate director, the training policy specialist, other resource persons, and program participants to conduct the study. Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to complete the EQ-i test (pre-test). A year after the workshop, the participants were invited to do EQ-i again (post-test). The literature suggests a minimum of a 6-month interval between the pre- and post-tests as the development is more likely to occur when this interval is provided (e.g., Clarke, 2010a; Clarke, 2010b; Groves et al., 2008; Moriarty & Buckley, 2003). A total EQ-i score in addition to five scores for each of the five EI dimensions (intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management, and general mood) were obtained for each participant for both pre- and post-tests scores.

Results

To assess the impact of the training intervention on EI levels of the participants, their pre-EQ-i and post-EQ-i scores on total EQ, and the five dimensions (intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress

management, and general mood) were compared. The results indicated that there was a growth in the EQ means for all the five dimensions, in addition to the total EQ after the training. The highest growth occurred in the interpersonal dimension where the mean score increased from $M=97.89$ to $M=103.5$, corresponding to a growth of 5.61 points. The second, third, and fourth greatest changes occurred for general mood (5.53), adaptability (5.5), and total EQ (4.66), respectively. The smallest growth was associated with the stress management (Pre $M=103.13$, Post $M=106.74$, Growth= 3.61) and Intrapersonal (Pre $M=103.66$, Post $M=108.05$, Growth= 4.39) dimensions. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the differences between the pre- and post-test mean scores.

Table 2 provides the means and standard deviations of the scores in the pre- and post-EQ-i tests for total EQ and the five EI dimensions. According to the results, there was a growth in the EQ total for the five dimensions after the training. To determine whether the observed increases in the post-test means scores were statistically significant, a paired sample t -test was conducted. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the total EQ mean scores at the pre- and post-tests, $t(37) = 2.334, p < .05$; thus hypothesis 1 was



EQ-i Standard Score

110+

100-109

90-99

Under 90

Interpretive Guideline

Enhanced – Well developed emotional capacity

Effective – adequately developed emotional capacity

Consider Developing – adequate emotional capacity, further development in certain areas may be warranted

Develop – Underdeveloped emotional capacity, requiring improvement

FIGURE 1. GROWTH IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE MEAN SCORES FOR TOTAL EQ AND THE FIVE DIMENSIONS

TABLE 2 **DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

EI VARIABLES	MEAN	N	STD. DEVIATION
Pre-Intrapersonal	103.66	38	16.170
Post-Intrapersonal	108.05	38	10.457
Pre-Interpersonal	97.89	38	13.410
Post-Interpersonal	103.50	38	9.747
Pre-Stress Management	103.13	38	15.087
Post-Stress Management	106.74	38	11.963
Pre-Adaptability Skills	96.11	38	18.943
Post-Adaptability Skills	101.61	38	12.927
Pre-General Mood Skills	96.21	38	14.555
Post-General Mood Skills	101.74	38	9.264
Total_EQPre	101.05	38	15.278
Total_EQPost	105.71	38	9.773

supported. In addition, a significant increase was observed for four of the five EI dimensions, including interpersonal $t(37) = 2.660, p < .05$; intrapersonal $t(37) = 2.157, p < .05$; adaptability $t(37) = 2.472, p < .05$; and general mood $t(37) = 2.272, p < .05$. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was partially supported. The only dimension in which no statistically significant increase was observed was stress management $t(37) = 1.843, p > .05$. The Cohen's d effect sizes for the five dimensions and the total EQ indicated a small magnitude of change for intrapersonal, stress management, and adaptability and a medium magnitude of change for interpersonal, general mood, and the total EQ (see Table 3).

Discussion

As a result of the important associations that exist between EI and workplace success, especially in the leadership domain, “studies that further our understandings of how emotional intelligence abilities can develop should have particular significance for a wide range of organizational settings” (Clarke, 2010a, p. 134). The empirical evidence obtained in this study provided additional support for the idea that leaders could be trained to improve their EI scores and awareness. In this study, participants’ mean scores in interpersonal skills increased the most, followed by the general mood and adaptability mean scores. Intrapersonal skills and stress management showed the smallest increase in their mean scores. While this was unexpected given the comprehensive nature of the training, the reason for it could be statistical. More often, when the scores are high in the pre-test, significant increases in the post-test do not occur because it is statistically unlikely they would perform any better. Kruml

TABLE 3 PAIRED SAMPLE T-TESTS FOR THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST MEAN SCORES									
EQ DIMENSIONS	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	STD. ERROR MEAN	95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL OF THE DIFFERENCE		t	DF	SIG. (2-TAILED)	COHEN'S D
				LOWER	UPPER				
Pre-Intrapersonal Post-Intrapersonal	-4.395	12.560	2.038	-8.523	-2.66	-2.157	37	.038*	.32
Pre-Interpersonal Post-Interpersonal	-5.605	12.992	2.108	-9.876	-1.335	-2.660	37	.011**	.48
Pre-Stress Management Post-Stress Management	-3.605	12.060	1.956	-7.569	.359	-1.843	37	.073	.26
Pre-Adaptability Post-Adaptability	-5.500	13.715	2.225	-10.008	-.992	-2.472	37	.018*	.33
Pre-General Mood Post-General Mood	-5.526	14.995	2.433	-10.455	-.598	-2.272	37	.029*	.45
Total_EQPre Total_EQPost	-4.658	12.303	1.996	-8.702	-.614	-2.334	37	.025*	.36

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01.

and Yockey (2011) investigated this issue and observed that the training intervention “improved EI for those who initially had low or average EI scores but not for those who started with a high EI” (p. 213). This seems to be the case here. Looking at Figure 1, it is evident that pre-test scores had the highest means for the dimensions of stress management ($M = 103.13$) and intrapersonal skills ($M = 103.66$).

The high pre-test scores on stress management and intrapersonal skills could indicate their importance for leadership responsibilities. During the coaching sessions, the participants reported stress management to be a major issue in their daily routines. Considering that they all had years of leadership experience, it is quite likely that they had acquired high levels of these skills during years of service. In this study, the pre-test scores for all the dimensions were high in that they were all close to the mean of 100. In spite of this, significant increases in the majority of the dimensions were observed, which demonstrates that the EI training intervention resulted in growth in mean scores. The small effect sizes could be associated with high pre-test scores.

The findings of this study make a significant contribution to the existing body of research on EI development. In addition, this study emphasizes the importance of EI training programs for leaders. During the workshop, the authors listened to many participants as they shared their experiences on how they responded to humanitarian crises in their workplace and how organizational and national politics affected their careers. Leaders who participated in this training asserted repeatedly that they needed to equip themselves with EI skills to be effective in their roles, especially in their social competencies and in relationship management

Implications for HRD Practice

Weaving emotional intelligence into organizational culture is a challenge for human resource development (HRD) practitioners. Organizations value only those skills that produce tangible and direct results; hence, HRD practitioners need to build a compelling case for EI training by demonstrating the positive impact of EI on individual and organizational performance. This should be grounded in evidence-based empirical research on the impact of EI in workplace performance. In addition, to be effective, training interventions should be designed through innovative and engaging approaches and according to the principles of adult learning and strategies of training transfer and transfer of learning. HRD has the best resources for practitioners to design, develop, implement, and evaluate the most influential EI training interventions in organizations and to ensure the transfer of EI training to the workplace.

Conclusion

The significance of emotional intelligence for effective leadership is well documented (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). EI skills may work well with technical knowledge to enhance the leadership capacity of the individuals

and to prepare them for higher managerial roles. In light of this, an EI training intervention was designed and implemented to educate the NGO leaders about the relevance of emotional skills in the workplace and facilitate the development of their EI competencies. The findings provided strong evidence that a well-designed training intervention could enhance the participants' EI scores and confirmed Bar-On's (2006) observation that EQ skills "are both teachable and learnable" (p. 22).

Limitations

There are limitations associated with this study. First, we did not have a control group due to practicality issues. Second, the sample size was small as a result of a high attrition rate that was beyond our control because of the difficulty associated with retaining executives with very demanding job duties in a study of this nature. Third, we did not control for any extraneous variables that might have intervened with the results. For example, participants' previous experiences, background, tenure with the organization, personality traits, cognitive intelligence, or education could have affected the results. Therefore, there is no way to ensure that the observed change in the participants' EI scores was solely the result of the training intervention. This study sought for differences and not causation. In addition, the study did not seek to predict or explain the changes in the EI mean scores. However, it should be mentioned that this limitation is associated with any quasi-experimental study in social sciences as there is no way to control for all the intervening variables. Fourth, this study relies on the information obtained from a self-report EI instrument. The accuracy of the obtained data is dependent on the honesty of the participants and their commitment to providing correct responses. Finally, the results of this study are limited to Bar-On's (1997) model, which is not the only conceptualization of EI. Utilizing other models might have generated different results.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future researchers could design studies with control and experimental groups; use larger sample sizes; use different EI models; and control for some extraneous variables such as cognitive intelligence, personality traits, and social desirability. Controlling for these constructs has been recommended by Salovey (2006) as a strategy to ensure that EI results are not contaminated by extraneous variables. Additionally, there might be factors that facilitate the development of EI. For instance, Clarke (2010a) noted that intensive participation in a team-based learning activity followed by an EI training course could lead to significant improvements in EI. Future research could concentrate on discovering other factors that might have the same impact. Finally, examining the performance of individuals who went through EI training and identifying the factors that facilitate the transfer of EI in the workplace are important research topics to pursue.

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